CHRISTIANITY AND THE BRITONS

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Christianity and the Britons

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE BRITONS

BY

W. S. AUCHINCLOSS, C.E.

AUTHOR OF THE "BOOK OF DANIEL UNLOCKED," "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY," "TO CANAAN IN ONE YEAR," "SAINT PETER THE APOSTLE OF ASIA," "HOW TO READ JOSEPHUS," ETC.

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PREFACE.

MANY persons entertain vague notions regarding the introduction of Christianity among the Britons. Some imagine that the British Isles were visited by one of the Apostles of our Lord. Others, that missionaries went from Gaul. While not a few look upon St. Augustine as the great missionary to the Britons, and suppose that little was done for their conversion before he landed on their shores. On the contrary, as we propose to show, Christianity had a foothold in Britain some 400 years before St. Augustine's day and continued to hold its ground under the same auspices—The Roman Catholic Church—for more than 900 years after his arrival.

In order to give the historic facts their true setting, we have hastily sketched the progress of the Christian Churches from the end of the first century to the beginning of the twentieth. From the time when Revelation ceased and the Bible became a completed book, to the time when it speaks in 456 tongues to the nations of the world in accents that proclaim its Divine origin.

W. S. A.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE BRITONS.

The contrast between the two dispensations of the Bible is very marked. The old discipline was minute and exact in every detail and all was modeled after the pattern shown to Moses in the Mount. While in the case of the new order, the largest measure of freedom was granted to the worshipper, stress alone being laid on the spiritual character of the exercise, which of necessity must rest on a bed-rock of truth.

In obedience to the command of the Master, the disciples entered upon their great work of teaching the nations to observe all things that He had commanded them. Wherever they went, they gathered together groups of converts, who for the most part made use of private houses as places of worship. As their numbers increased, they erected special buildings or churches and every effort was made to settle the work of teaching on a surer basis than was possible at the beginning. Before the first century ended, there were churches in Judea, in Samaria, in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus. Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, Cilicia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Bithynia, Babylon, Illyricum, Alexandria, Rome and other places too numerous to mention. These churches, in respect to discipline, gave evidence of the freedom that was granted by the Master, outlined in the book of The Acts, and contended for by the Apostle Paul. No sooner had the work of teaching reached this stage of maturity than a final Revelation was made to the Apostle John regarding seven of the above-named cities, which ended with these words:

"HE THAT HATH AN EAR LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES."

And then, as if to make sure that none were overlooked, the New Testament closed with these words:

"I, JESUS HAVE SENT MINE ANGEL TO TESTIFY UNTO YOU THESE THINGS IN THE CHURCHES."

This testimony, of course, supplements the other books of the New Testament because every one of them was written before the angel arrived. The discipline or polity of the New Testament therefore stands approved, with no further revelation from that day to the present hour.

Three things are very significant, in this last message from the unseen world. 1st. that each church would be held to a personal responsibility. 2d. that nothing was said about a merger of the Churches under a single control; the whole stress being laid on the spirituality of the worshippers and not on the character of such ritual or discipline as they had found best suited to their individual or national wants. Lastly: the message was to the individual Churches; not to "THE CHURCH," not to "THE ELDERS," not to "THE BISHOPS," but to "THE CHURCHES" themselves.

Here, then, are the final directions, and about these there need be no discussion. Soon after the receipt of these directions the first century of the Christian Era came to its close.

The second century opened with a dark cloud on the horizon,—a lurking ambition in favor of a central-power. This idea was first broached in a general way by St. Ignatius about A.D. 110.

During the next thirty years, Christian thought followed the new trend and was ready for moulding into a definite form by A.D. 140, at which time the Liber Pontificalis assures us that:

"Hyginus arranged the Clergy and distributed the Gradations."

The master-stroke however was yet to be given, a head must be appointed for the Clergy. This was carefully considered

during the next thirty years and at length in A.D. 170 the Apostle Peter was declared to have been the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. It seems a pity that this discovery was not made while the great Apostle was still alive and while he was busily engaged in the far East, building up the churches of Babylon, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, for then Silas and Mark were with him and he could have sent special salutations to the church it was claimed he had established in Rome. But unfortunately the discovery was more than a century behind time and no evidence now exists that the great Apostle ever placed foot inside the walls of Rome. (See *St. Peter the Apostle of Asia*).

The writings of Celsus prove that the period, having A.D. 160 as its centre, was a time of great unrest. He declares that:

"At first, when there were but few of them, all agreed; but now they have become numerous they separate from one another; every man wishes to found a new sect, and now their agreement is only in name."

What more potent name could have been selected from among the twelve apostles than that of the Apostle Peter? Our Lord had given him, according to the Roman view, all authority both on earth and in heaven. Their choice therefore was a bold stroke executed at an opportune moment and destined to exert a far-reaching influence. After this, did storms of heresy arise?—The waves were impotent as they beat upon "the Rock" on which "The Church" was founded. Were there doubts in any minds, as to doctrine or ritual?—St. Peter's example or dictum allayed them at once and the threat of a possible turn of the Keys brought the most refractory into submission.

The Venerable Baeda—father of Ecclesiastical history in Britain—when writing about 730, tells us of a noted conference held in A.D. 664, over which king Oswy presided, where the disputants were Wilfrid on the part of Rome and Colman on behalf of the Picts. The king was at last won over to the Roman side and closed the discussion with these words:

"And I also say unto you that he (St. Peter) is the door-keeper, whom I will not contradict, but will, as far as I know and am able, in all things obey his decrees, lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved (by you) to have the Keys."

The credit for this shrewd selection belongs to the Latins and not to the Greeks. The year 170 therefore marks a transition period when the Latins, or ruling class at Rome, made their influence felt and came to the front in the Christian circles of that city. They then displaced the Greeks, grafted on their own ideas and finally made Latin the language of the Church. During the first century Latin was the language of the Roman Senate and diplomacy, but Greek was the language of commerce. Both Latin and Greek were taught in the public schools of Rome and the teachers were paid out of the public treasury. The Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament, was read in the synagogues every Sabbath day, and the books of the New Testament, written in Greek, were read in the Christian assemblies every Lord's day. The Apostles Paul and John spent many years of their lives in preaching the Gospel to Greek communities, and their converts became the chosen leaders of the Roman churches. Examine the list of names of those who Presided in the Church of Rome, beginning with Linus and ending with Eleutherus and you will find, that with hardly an exception all were of Greek origin. Then came Victor—the Latin in A.D. 189—armed with a claim to pre-eminence, whereupon the Greek influence gradually withered and finally disappeared, being replaced wholly by the Latin.

The declaration made in A.D. 170, that St. Peter was the first Pope of Rome, laid the foundation for a host of claims-to-control, that have been advanced from that day to the present. Claims that certain men have the right to rule, because they have been endowed with power from on high, by laying on the hands of others who preceded them, back to a like gift conferred by the Apostles. This legacy of the Second Century

reached full fruition in the year A.D. 1870 when Church Councils became altogether unnecessary, because the Pope was declared to be infallible and to him was given "full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the Universal Church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those which relate to the discipline and government of the Church spread throughout the World." As to his temporal power, the coronation service left no room for doubt by the use of the following words: "Take thou the tiara, with the triple crown, and know that thou art the father of princes and of kings and art the governor of the World." Thus was the famous doctrine of papal infallibility made to cover the whole ground. This climax was only reached after 1700 years of conflict and after more than a score of Œcumenical Councils had rendered their weighty decisions. In fact the process of moulding a central-power was attended with great difficulties, its advance, according to St. Jerome, having been made on the "by-little-and-little" principle.

As we direct our vision toward the centuries during which this moulding process has been in operation, we are too apt to use our mental telescope with all the tubes pushed in, so that our landscape has no more perspective than a Chinese picture where everything stands in the immediate foreground. We must first pull out the tubes to the right focus and get the centuries in their true perspective before we can see things as they really happened. As an illustration, take what is universally known as the Apostles Creed. Surely, any document so named ought to date from the first century. But not until A.D. 336 do we find any trace of it in literature. In that year Marcellus presented a creed to Pope Julius, which approached it in form but not in fullness of statement. The perfected creed did not appear until about A.D. 750, when the Pope received it from Pirminius,—already sawed and split into twelve sections,—with the name of an Apostle under each section. Hence the title "Apostles Creed." During the process of expansion the words "Holy Church" grew to be "Holy Catholic Church," which reading has been retained to the present day.

In like manner the Nicene Creed began to take shape in A.D. 325, was doubled in size in the year 381 and finally received the "filioque clause" at the Council of Toledo in A.D. 589.

The celebration of Easter affords another illustration of this slow process of growth. The word Easter does not appear in the R. V. of the Bible, we read only of what Herod intended to do after the Passover, and St. Paul said he "must by all means keep this feast." The everlasting contention over this question, that took place in the early church is proof positive that the Apostles did not institute the feast, for had they done so they would have fixed a day on which it should be celebrated. The subject was first agitated in the second century and the contention is still going on in the twentieth century.

The Council of Nicaea decided three points:

1. Easter day should always fall on a Sunday.
2. It should never be celebrated on the same day as the Passover.
3. The Sunday must fall after the Vernal Equinox.

Yet this did not bring uniformity, for Rome made its calculations with an 84-year cycle and Alexandria with one of 19 years, they differed also as to the date of the Equinox. The Gregorian method of calculation introduced in the sixteenth century, which still lacks the endorsement of the Greek Church, conflicts at times with the second point of the Council of Nicaea by bringing Easter and the Passover on one and the same day.

For example:

In	1825	Easter	and	the	Passover	fell	on	April	3d.
"	1903	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	12th.
"	1923	"	"	"	"	will	fall	on	April	1st.
"	1927	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	17th.
"	1981	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	19th.

The present practise, therefore, clashes with a primitive custom and does that which was positively forbidden by the Council of Nicaea.

Still more curious is the extraordinary growth of the accom-

panying fast, which from a little beginning of *40 HOURS* on or about A.D. 190, grew by easy stages, first to 5 days, then to 15 days, afterwards to 30 days; then to 36 days—on the idea of one-tenth of human time belonging to the Lord—and finally to 40 DAYS, on or about A.D. 800, when it happily stopped growing and has remained stationary ever since.

St. Irenaeus writing about A.D. 190 said:

"The controversy is not merely as regards the day (Easter) but also as regards the form itself of the fast (Lent) for some consider themselves to fast one day, others two days, others still more; while others do so during 40 *HOURS*." [That is, from 3 P.M. Good Friday to 7 A.M. Easter Sunday, see Hefele's *Church Councils*, p. 303.]

This luxurious increase—from *40 HOURS* to 40 DAYS—has no parallel in Ecclesiastical history, but shows what tradition can do when she tries hard.

As regards liturgies, the first two made their appearance about the year A.D. 200, and are known respectively as the Liturgy of St. James and the Liturgy of St. Mark.

As to Christmas Day, it was decided in A.D. 410 to celebrate it on the day of the winter solstice, viz: December 25th

These and other final decisions we are prone to think of as having been reached in New Testament times, when in reality they are simply results obtained from a series of compromises among Christians, which were brought about after centuries spent in trying to establish over the Churches in every land, a central-power with absolute control.

We have said above that Rome attained its pre-eminence gradually. The mere declaration of A.D. 170, that St. Peter was the first Pope of Rome, was not sufficient in itself to carry conviction to the minds of those who had been trained otherwise. The Greek Church put forward a claim to authority resting the same on the Apostle John, the Armenian Church on St. Thomas and the Coptic Church on St. Mark. Contentions however subsided in A.D. 325 when the Church of the East and the Church of the West met by order of Constantine

the Great at Nicaea. The harmony there secured lasted 264 years, but was destroyed by the Council of Toledo when it gave its approval to the "filioque clause" and made the same a part of the Creed. The Greek Church protested against this departure from Catholic faith and ever since has declared that Rome is no longer the true Church, but by that act she became a SECT—a very favorite term among Christians even at the present day, as applied to representatives of other phases of Christian faith and practise. This is specially the case where they themselves feel absolutely certain of being the true Church. We have mentioned above, the Church of the West without specifying its branches. These were four in number, viz:

The Church of Gaul,
The Church of Spain,
The Church of Britain,
The Church of Africa.

Our interest naturally clusters around the Church of Britain and leads us to inquire when and how Christianity was first introduced in the British Isles?

About the year A.D. 180, or ten years after St. Peter was declared to be the first Pope of Rome, Lucius king of the Britons sent to Pope Eleutherus a request for missionaries to teach him the principles of Christianity. The evidence in this case is unusually strong, the fact being vouched for by Baeda in Historia Ecclesiastica, by the Liber Pontificalis, by Nennius and by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The presumption in its favor was strengthened also by Tertullian in A.D. 208 who claimed "the unruly Britons as subjects of Christ." Again by Origen in A.D. 239, who agreed with Tertullian.

From this modest beginning, the steady growth of the infant church may be gauged by the increase in its number of bishops. We have:

A.D. 180. Two missionaries sent by the Pope
A.D. 314. Three bishops attended the Synod of Arles.
A.D. 603. Seven bishops attended the Synod of Gloucestershire.

At first sight seven may seem a small number, but it should be remembered that scarcely had Roman rule ended in Britain, than the Jutes, Angelns and Saxons descended on its shores about A. D. 450 bringing with them the heathenism of Woden and being animated by a fierce hostility toward Christianity, they struggled for over a century to uproot the faith. In view of that experience, the appointment of seven bishops in the first 400 years should be regarded as an exceedingly good record.

Britain was a Roman colony from its conquest by Julius Caesar in B.C. 55 to its abandonment by the Emperor Honorius in A.D. 410, and although more than 100 beautifully carved and inscribed altars of the Roman period have been found by archeologists, not a single vestige of Christian art belonging to the first three centuries has been discovered. In view of these facts it is evident that if any one or more of the original Apostles visited Britain, he or they did not stay long enough to do any good, for the next 100 years were a perfect Sahara desert so far as Christian records and monuments are concerned. Furthermore, they left no impress on the Christianity of later days. This is clearly demonstrated by the experience of St. Augustine in A.D. 603, also that of St. Theodore in 673. Both of these noted divines—Archbishops of Canterbury—labored earnestly to bring the worship of the Church of the Britons into conformity with that of Rome. To accomplish this they insisted on three radical changes:

1. Easter: Must be observed on the day fixed by the Romans.
2. Baptism: Must be administered in the Roman way.
3. Tonsure: The head must be shaved St. Peter fashion.

N. B.—The St. Peter tonsure was like a full moon.
The Simon Magus tonsure was like a crescent.

With these three exceptions alone, all other matters were declared to be *non-essentials*, and of no importance whatever.

The proposed celebration of Easter on a given day would

avoid awkward occurrences incident to a double celebration, like the following given in Baeda:

"Thus it is said to have happened in those times (A.D. 652) that Easter was twice kept in one year; and that when the King, having ended the time of fasting kept his Easter, the Queen and her followers were still fasting and celebrating Palm Sunday."

Tonsure and mode of baptism were simply changes of livery and require no special comment in this connection.

It will be observed that the differences above recorded are exactly the same as those of the unsettled period A.D. 180 when the Britons received their first missionaries, and long before Rome attained the pre-eminence.

Can you for an instant imagine that the Church of the Britons learned these three objectionable practises from any of the twelve Apostles?—and if so, from which one of the Apostles?—Or do you find anything in the New Testament that would sustain such a theory?—The conclusion is irresistible that not one of the Apostles ever landed on the British Isles.

It is perfectly plain, therefore, that the Church of the Britons was directly indebted to the Roman Catholic Church for its Christian training, and according to history it became, between A. D. 180 and 680, the object of special solicitude on the part of five Pontiffs, viz:

1. Pope Eleutherus,
2. Pope Siricius,
3. Pope Celestine,
4. Pope Gregory,
5. Pope Vitalian.

Although St. Augustine was consecrated First Archbishop of Canterbury by Pope Gregory, yet the seven bishops of the Britons received their Superior very coldly, for we read that when he invited them to a conference he would not so much as rise to welcome them, but remained seated and conversed with them through an interpreter. The five Archbishops who suc-

ceeded St. Augustine fared no better, and like him were dependent on interpreters for making known their thoughts to the people.

At last in A.D. 668 a Greek monk Theodore of Tarsus was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury by Pope Vitalian. He was a man of great executive ability and force of character, with a ready command of the English language. Baeda says that Theodore was

"the first Archbishop whom all the English Church obeyed."

This brings us to the point where the Church of the Britons having ceased to exist, the "English Church" took its place and continued in power for the next 900 years, when it in turn was displaced by the "Church of England," under Henry VIII. Thus we see that no interruption or break was made in the line of the Roman Succession from its starting point, over to the organization of the Church of England. The transition that took place during the reign of Pope Vitalian was simply a case of absorption—the child returned to the parental roof.

Without stopping to inquire as to the value of that Apostolic Succession, which first saw the light of day about the close of the 2nd Century, we shall rapidly turn the pages of history, passing the Norman conquest, the Crusades, the voyages of discovery which gave the American Continent to the world, also the age of spiritual decline, when the Holy Bible was chained in the places of worship and the future outlook was exceedingly dark.

Suddenly at this juncture, one of the great truths of God's word, viz:

—"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH"—

dawned upon the mind of the German monk Martin Luther. He rose from doing penance and was thenceforth a free man. He soon began the great work of reform and others followed his

brilliant example. With a burning zeal for the salvation of souls, the Reformers unchained the Holy Bible, translated it into the language of the common people and sent it broadcast throughout the world, fully realizing that it was God's message to man, a treasure of priceless value.

As to discipline and ritual, the Reformers turned their faces toward Apostolic days and sought to remove errors that had crept in since the time when the disciples first entered upon their great work of teaching the nations. The frank confession made by St. Irenaeus in A.D. 190, throws much light upon the many difficulties encountered by the Reformers. He said in part:—

"This variety our predecessors, some of them probably being not very accurate, handed down to posterity as it had through *Simplicity* or *Private Fancy* been introduced among them."

In carrying out their scaling process, the Reformers claimed for themselves the same generous liberty and personal responsibility as characterized the Churches of the First Century. Since all the Reformers sprang from the Church of Rome, they all had a common inheritance in the writings of the Fathers, the decrees of the Councils, the liturgies, the creeds, and the formulæ of the past and were therefore free to make use of them, or else to do with their own whatever they deemed best suited to promote the worship of God "in spirit and in truth." They were equally free to choose the Historic-Eldership of the first century, or perchance the Historic-Episcopate of the second century, in fact any form of government which in their judgment was calculated to secure the best discipline.

A few of them selected the Yea-Yea and the Nay-Nay of primitive days; the greater portion decided to follow the example plainly set forth in the Acts of the Apostles, while those who lived in countries where church and state were allied, as for instance Germany and England, found that aside from their preferences their vested interests could best be maintained by

using a liturgy, or clarified form of the Roman and Gallican Missals. In England, the decision was voiced by the king, the "Supreme Head on Earth of the Church."

Thus, step by step, conditions more or less characteristic of the first century have been restored, the Bible once more is in position to exercise its marvellous influence and again its language declares as of old:

"WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES."

Surely, the voice has not gone unheeded, for in *all the Churches* highly talented scholars have devoted their lives to the mastery of strange languages, and in some instances have created a written language for uncivilized races, in order that they might translate the Bible and place it in the hands of every human being on the face of the whole earth. The outcome of this herculean task has been to make the Bible the only book in the world that has been translated into 456 languages in 400 years.

Over against this splendid record, stands that of the central-power church of the Second Century, with only about 6 translations to its credit in 1700 years.

Like as it requires many ships of different types to handle the commerce of the world, so it requires many Churches to properly bring out the truth contained in God's Holy Word. The two great Bible Societies of Britain and America plainly illustrate what results can be achieved when all the Churches agree to work together. No one church could have accomplished so gigantic an undertaking. It required united action on the part of all the Churches and the bringing together of their varied talents, each under its own organization, but all working for the common good.

Prior to the Reformation, the city of Vienna and other noted cities of Europe were surrounded by high walls with closed gates. Now all this has been changed, and we often find, in the place where the walls formerly stood, public gardens of great beauty. So too, with the Churches of the Twentieth Century,

we find everywhere that the walls of exclusiveness have either already been removed, or else that they are fast crumbling away and flowers of brotherly affection are flourishing where the walls formerly stood.

But best of all, the Holy Spirit Himself has placed the stamp of approval on the work of the Churches and proven for the ten thousandth time that His work cannot be bound by any human limitations, or kept within the enclosure of any one Church.

Mark then, what

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has done for the world!—Prize it still more highly!—Use it night and day, as the mariner uses his compass!—Above all, teach the children to love it dearly and to treasure in their hearts its sacred truths.

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PREFACE.

In this age of railroad travel, whoever owns a chronometer of such erratic construction that it varies anywhere from 42 minutes *ahead* of time to 63 minutes *behind* time, would surely give it up as a hopeless case and would naturally seek one upon which he could place implicit confidence. The same want of reliability is true of that chronology, which for so long a time has been identified with the King James version of the Bible, only its inaccuracies are counted by *years* and not by minutes. Now that the world has a Revised Version of the Bible, the time has come for it to adopt a Revised Chronology in keeping with the statements of the Bible. We herewith submit a system the outcome of a careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture, also the product of a geometrical plotting of events to a mathematical scale. [Copies of these charts will be found in the Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco Public Libraries, also in the library of the British Museum.] They were made for the purpose of bringing out clearly the mutual relation of events and settling all points of difference that could not accurately be determined otherwise.

W. S. A.

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PREFACE.

Born in Syria, spending his early manhood in Galilee, his maturer life in and near Jerusalem, and his declining years in countries bordering the Black Sea, the Apostle Peter should be known in history only by the title of Apostle to Asia. Tradition has cast such a glamour over his ministry, that his name in our day is associated mainly with Rome and the Romans. By reason of this strange transplanting of facts from the East to the West, great diversities have arisen among Christian communities, and the future will be a repetition of the past, unless coming generations are willing to turn the search-lights of truth squarely upon the important events that transpired between the years A. D. 33 and A. D. 150. Once disclose the fact that actually no foundation exists for a claim to preëminence, and you remove from among Christians one of the most potent causes of disagreement, and thus in large measure open the way for true fellowship.

May the light, which comes from the dawn of the Christian era, dispel the twilight of Tradition and prove effectual in leading many to recognize a common Brotherhood in the one Lord and Master.

W. S. A.

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BY

W. S. AUCHINCLOSS, C.E.

INTRODUCTION BY

Prof. A. H. SAYCE, LL.D., Queen's College, Oxford, England

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PREFACE.

Beyond all question, Josephus is a hard writer to follow and many often feel when consulting his Works as though they were at sea without date or compass. This defect however can be overcome as Josephus was no romancer, but at all times the conscientious and upright historian. He took a prominent part in the affairs of the first century, about which he wrote as an eye witness. As regards preceding ages he culled facts and figures from the "Sacred Books" of the Jews, of which he was made the Custodian, also from a fine reference library. He names fifty authors found in that collection. His great fault lies in the fact that being an active man of affairs he did not take the trouble to properly review his own writings, striking out conflicting statements, supplying omissions, and correcting miscalculations; he simply drove ahead and left this heritage of careless composition.

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Israel's journey may be divided into three sections, viz:— Rameses to Sinai, thence to Kadesh, and finally to the crossing of the Jordan. They tarried 11 months at Sinai and 38 years at Kadesh.

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